



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Nevada Natural Resources Conservation Service Working Lands For Wildlife



State Strategy

FY 2021-2025

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW) FY 21-25 Nevada state strategy is to develop a spatially-explicit and state-based business plan that will guide the investment of newly committed Farm Bill resources. Each NRCS state is refining its WLFW initiative priorities through FY2025. Within areas serviced by Nevada NRCS there are currently two initiatives under the WLFW umbrella. The Sage Grouse Initiative has been well established throughout the northern portions of the state since 2010, with high levels of buy in and numerous collaborative conservation actions accomplished. The Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Initiative currently focuses on several desert stream systems and their associated riparian areas in the southern portion of the state. Throughout the duration of this state plan Nevada NRCS hopes to be able to increase the level of conservation work towards the protection and/or improvement of our sensitive desert riparian habitats in order to benefit the myriad of species that depend on these systems for at least a portion of their life cycle. The estimates collected for projects planned, or expected, to be accomplished during this 5 year period will be rolled-up to develop a west region-wide strategy and plan. After this business plan update, NRCS-Nevada will continue to engage partners in developing more detailed state-based WLFW implementation strategies to further refine delivery of business plan commitments.

Through Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), USDA uses a win-win approach to systematically target conservation efforts to improve agricultural and forest productivity which in turn

enhance wildlife habitat on working landscapes. Target species have been used as barometers for success because their habitat needs are representative of healthy, functioning ecosystems where conservation efforts benefit a much broader suite of species. As WLFW moves forward in this current iteration, focus and efforts will be placed more on protecting, improving, and/or restoring areas at the ecological biome level (i.e. sagebrush, desert riparian, and great plains biomes).

Through the Farm Bill, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to participants who voluntarily make improvements to their working lands while the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) provides participants with regulatory predictability for the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with federally listed species and those species at risk of becoming listed. This innovative approach empowers landowners with a means to make on-the-ground improvements and provides peace of mind that no matter the legal status of a species, they can keep their working lands working.

This model has proven extremely popular with private landowners across the United States. To date, WLFW has helped producers conserve more than 8 million acres of wildlife habitat and has helped many species such as the greater sage-grouse in the West and the New England cottontail in the Northeast. For both species — in large part because of voluntary conservation efforts on private lands — the FWS determined listing under ESA was not warranted. Beginning in 2017, NRCS expanded this model and now includes 19 landscapes covering 48 States.

There has been a significant amount of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance completed on public land by land management agencies in recent years. NRCS projects will be refined over the next several years to tie in with the BLM, USFS, BOR, NPS, DOD and other land management agencies' planning efforts. This is very significant given that 86% of the lands in the state of Nevada are within public land ownership, especially in locations where a lot of the resource concerns (conifer encroachment, invasive annual grasses) are occurring. The remaining 14% of the land is private and contains a major percentage of our wet meadow and riparian habitats including brood rearing habitat that is critical for young sage grouse, as well as, limited and sensitive desert riparian habitats in southern Nevada that provide habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, Least Bell's vireo and hundreds of other riparian obligate species. Through both of these initiatives NRCS Nevada hopes to continue to develop strong working relationships with partners and producers and work towards large expanses of healthy, functioning working landscapes which provide benefit to the producers who cultivate or utilize the land and the wildlife that are dependent on it for their survival.



Working Lands For Wildlife



Hello,

This strategy was built on deep local knowledge at the field office level, along with input from a host of partners including, but not limited to, Nevada Conservation Districts, Bureau of Land Management, Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest, and Nevada Department of Wildlife. As State Conservationist, we need all partners to assist in the actualization of this plan. This is a small step along the path to the destination of a thriving agricultural community with sustained keystone species management. I have no doubt about the commitment of the NRCS staff to see this plan come to pass.

Thank you!

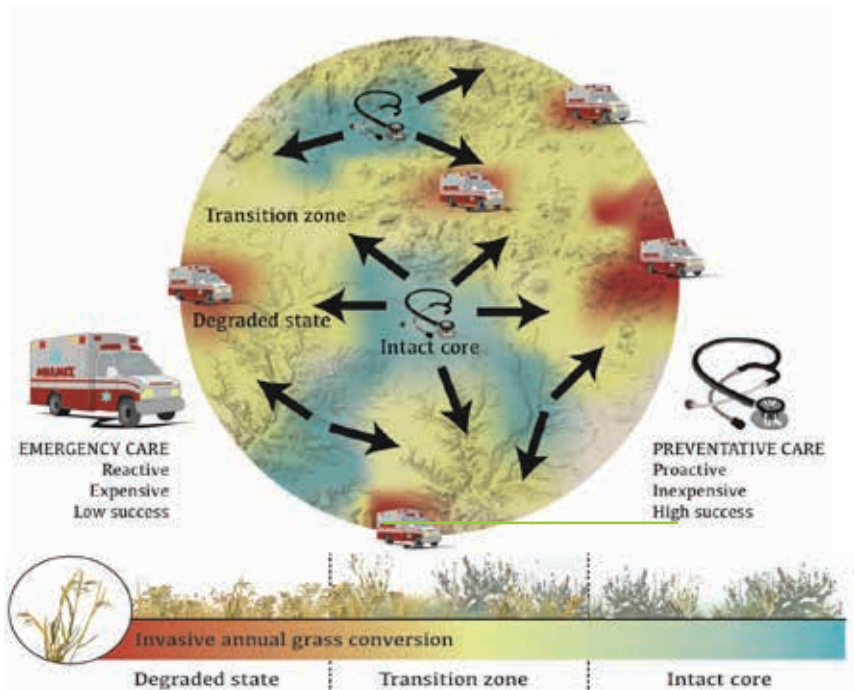
Ray Dotson, NRCS Nevada State Conservationist

The efforts and beneficial impacts on the landscape from Working Lands For Wildlife initiatives are best achieved at the intersection of several key factors illustrated in the diagram below. Conservation efforts are most effective in areas in which an established and productive population of targeted wildlife species occurs, where there is a large core area of intact (i.e. contiguous) and ecologically stable habitat for wildlife, and where there is public and private interest in assisting in conservation efforts. By targeting areas where these factors intersect, WLFW is best able to have impactful and quantifiable positive effects on wildlife and their habitat while also improving their rangelands for agricultural purposes.



With the newly adapted proactive WLFW strategy, the goal is to protect intact core habitat areas, while conducting additional conservation work in the transition zones between core areas and heavily degraded areas. Once a land is heavily degraded, the costs of restoration can become extremely prohibitive and, even when attempted, the results of restoration work are often less than anticipated or ineffective at addressing the resource concern. By protecting the lands that are in good condition and treating the surrounding transition, or early invasion/at risk lands, WLFW will be able to accomplish more positive impacts across the landscape through conservation actions for target species (and all other species that utilize those lands), with far less monetary commitment.

Proactive spatial strategy has been missing



Wildlife Concerns

More and more species are being proposed for and/or added to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) list. It has been shown that the ESA regulatory functions alone can be effective with some imperiled species. Banning the use of specific insecticides such as DDT allowed for the recovery of many raptor species, including the bald eagle and peregrine falcon, while regulations controlling the hunting of species such as the American alligator and American bison helped lead to the recovery of those species. However, in many cases, regulation on its own is ineffective at moving the needle towards recovery for a species, and in instances such as this, or those involving unlisted species which are at risk of listing, collaborative and voluntary conservation efforts have been shown to be extremely effective. In 83% of cases where regulatory policy has been coupled with voluntary conservation efforts for an imperiled species, that species has seen stabilizing or improving trends towards recovery.

Voluntary Conservation Provides Solution



traditional regulatory approach

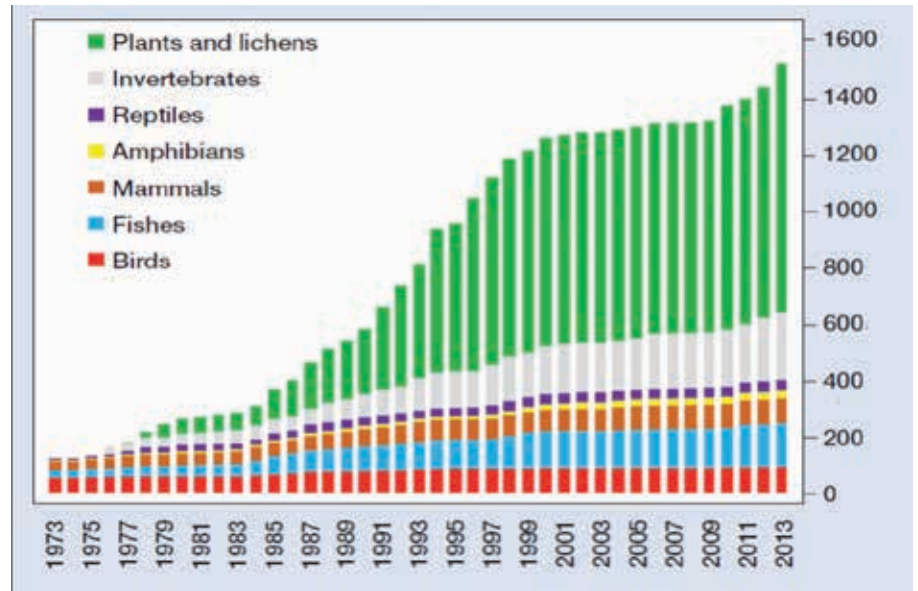


conservation-reliant species

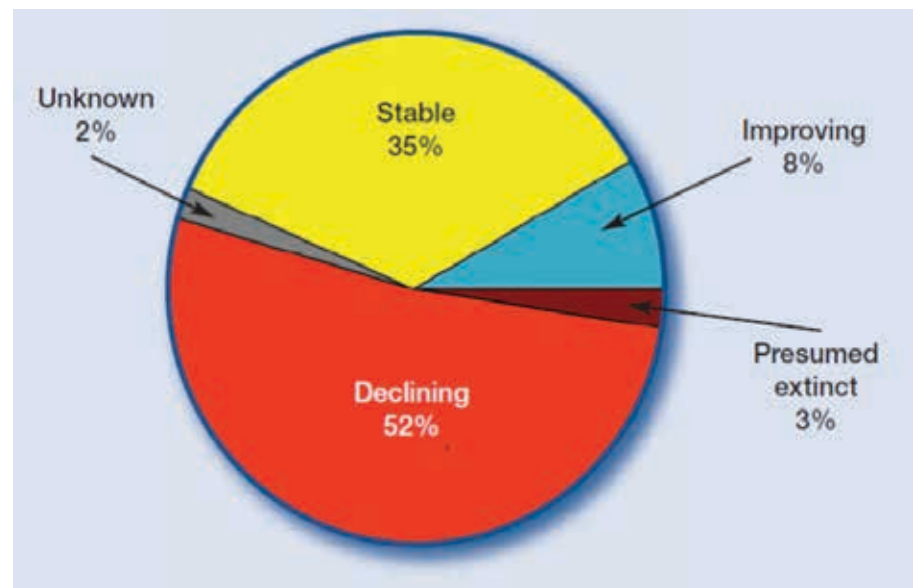


Once a species is listed, the regulatory restrictions placed upon agricultural producers can greatly impact their productivity and profitability, and many of these species do not trend toward recovery, but instead remain in an imperiled state. Historically, efforts to help conserve at-risk species have developed after that species is already imperiled and focused regulatory actions on preventing actions that would have a negative impact and further imperil the species or continue its downward trajectory towards extinction. Through collaborative conservation efforts between various federal and state agencies, as well as private land owners and conservation groups, it is possible to positively impact imperiled species to a point where they do not warrant protection under the ESA, assist in the recovery of a listed species to the point it is down listed or removed from federal protection under the ESA, and provide the peace of mind and regulatory protection to producers who work in and around the habitats of listed species.

Few species are improving

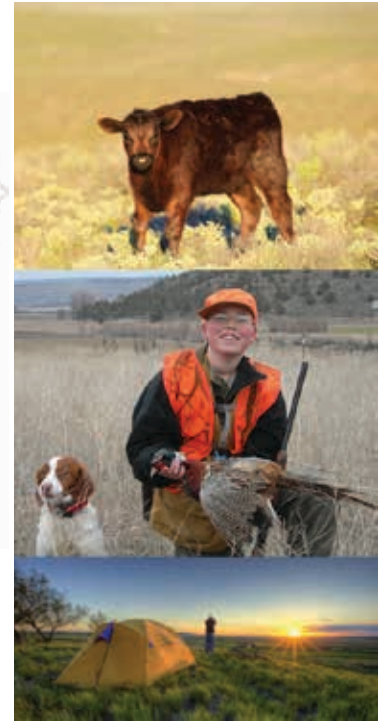


Number of listed species skyrockets



Trends in recovery status for 1,292 listed species, 1990-2010

Why Rangelands?



Take Home: Maintain your Intact Rangelands

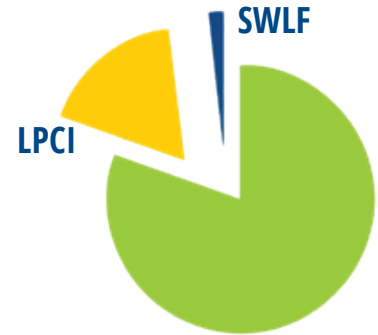
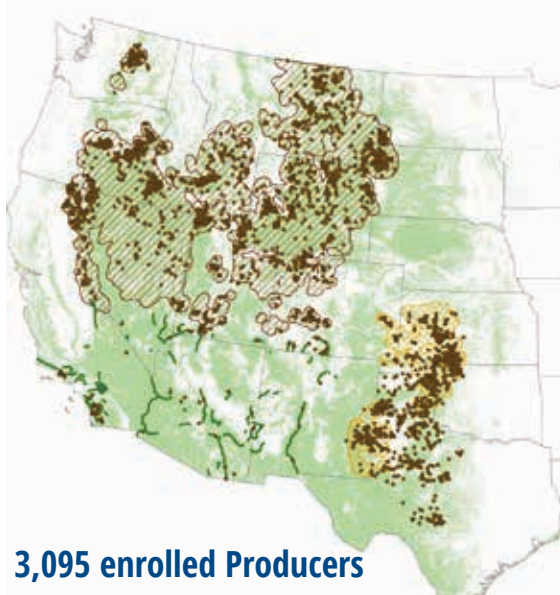


Best umbrella for multi-species conservation

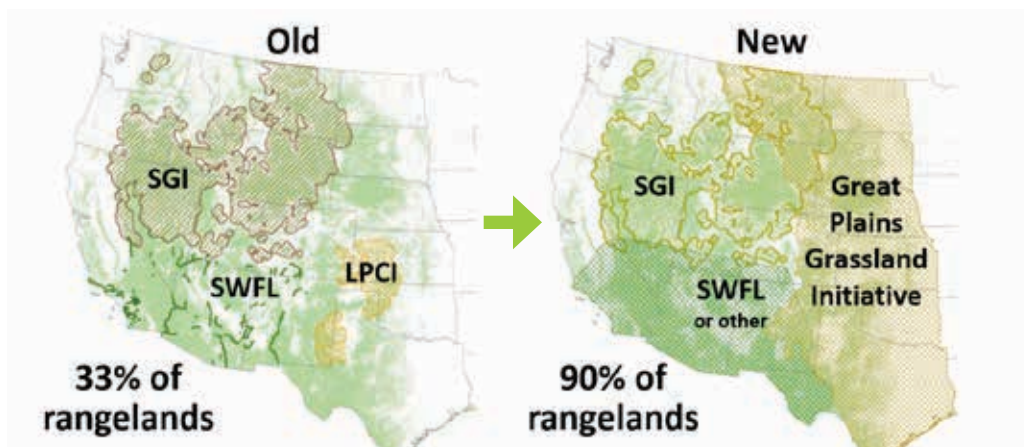


Why focus on rangelands? As can be seen in the map above, a large proportion of the western landscape is dominated by rangelands. This provides a vast area where WLFW, NRCS, and all the producers and partners can have significant impacts on wildlife and overall rangeland health. Additionally, while management specifically focused on some species that have traditionally been considered “umbrella” species does have far reaching impacts on other wildlife, when focus is shifted from species-specific to a rangeland-wide ecological biome focus, the amount of wildlife species positively impacted is greatly increased. This results in more benefit to a greater number of wildlife species, healthier rangelands overall, and more productive agricultural operations.

Past Focus and Accomplishments



There are two WLFW initiatives within the state of Nevada. The Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) has been in existence since 2010 and has experienced immense support leading to millions of acres of rangelands being improved or protected. The Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Initiative (SWFLI) began with the inception of WLFW in 2012 and has had difficulty gaining traction to date. While the identified focal areas for SGI will remain relatively unchanged with this new WLFW iteration, the focus of the initiative will shift towards protection and restoration of the sagebrush biome as a whole. Within the next 1-2 years there will be a re-envisioning of the SWFLI into more of a “desert southwest” or “desert riparian” initiative to better capture all the rangelands of that region to improve watersheds as a whole, and perennial streams and riparian corridors in particular. As can be seen in the graphic below, the species-specific method of delineating initiative boundaries left the vast majority of rangelands outside of initiative boundaries. Adjusting the SWFLI in the desert southwest and the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative on the Great Plains into a more ecoregion-wide focus greatly increases the amount of rangeland where quality conservation work can be done under WLFW.



Additionally, by putting focus on landscape health, and utilizing an ecological biome level focus, it is not only the focal species which benefits. Instead, all the species, whether an obligate to that rangeland, or those whose migration patterns seasonally bring them through those areas, are positively affected. Over 350 species of animals are dependent on the sagebrush biome for at least a portion of their life cycle. Similarly, in the desert southwest hundreds of species (including many ESA listed species) are dependent on riparian habitat. By protecting and improving the habitat at a landscape scale, and maintaining intact rangelands, it is possible to help a myriad of wildlife species while also improving the health and productivity of rangelands for agricultural use.



Photo by Ken Miracle

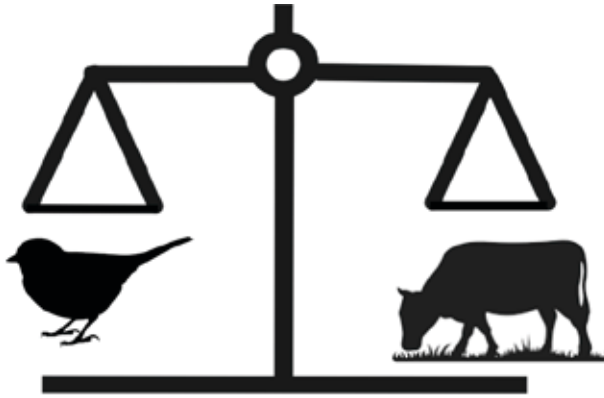


Photo by Jeremy Roberts Conservation Media

The Working Lands For Wildlife team is also at the forefront of creating actionable science that can assist with adaptive management on rangelands. This diverse group of scientists from multiple universities, federal and state agencies, and non-profit organizations, work to identify and address gaps in current science and work to conduct studies to fill knowledge gaps, assess the effectiveness of conservation treatments, evaluate the range-wide impacts of actions taken, create new technologies to assist in planning conservation, and target areas where the greatest level of success though conservation efforts can be accomplished.



Outcomes for Ranching and Wildlife



Wildlife remains core to strategy; ranching outcomes now equally important

During the next five years of implementation, Working Lands For Wildlife will be focused on addressing the needs of rangeland obligate wildlife species. Moving forward an emphasis will also be placed in the selection criteria for projects and actions that will also improve rangeland conditions for ranching operations. As can be seen in the graphic here, actions that are taken to benefit imperiled or at-risk wildlife species very often have tangible benefits to the health and vitality of livestock herds.



60% more forage



2 more weeks of water

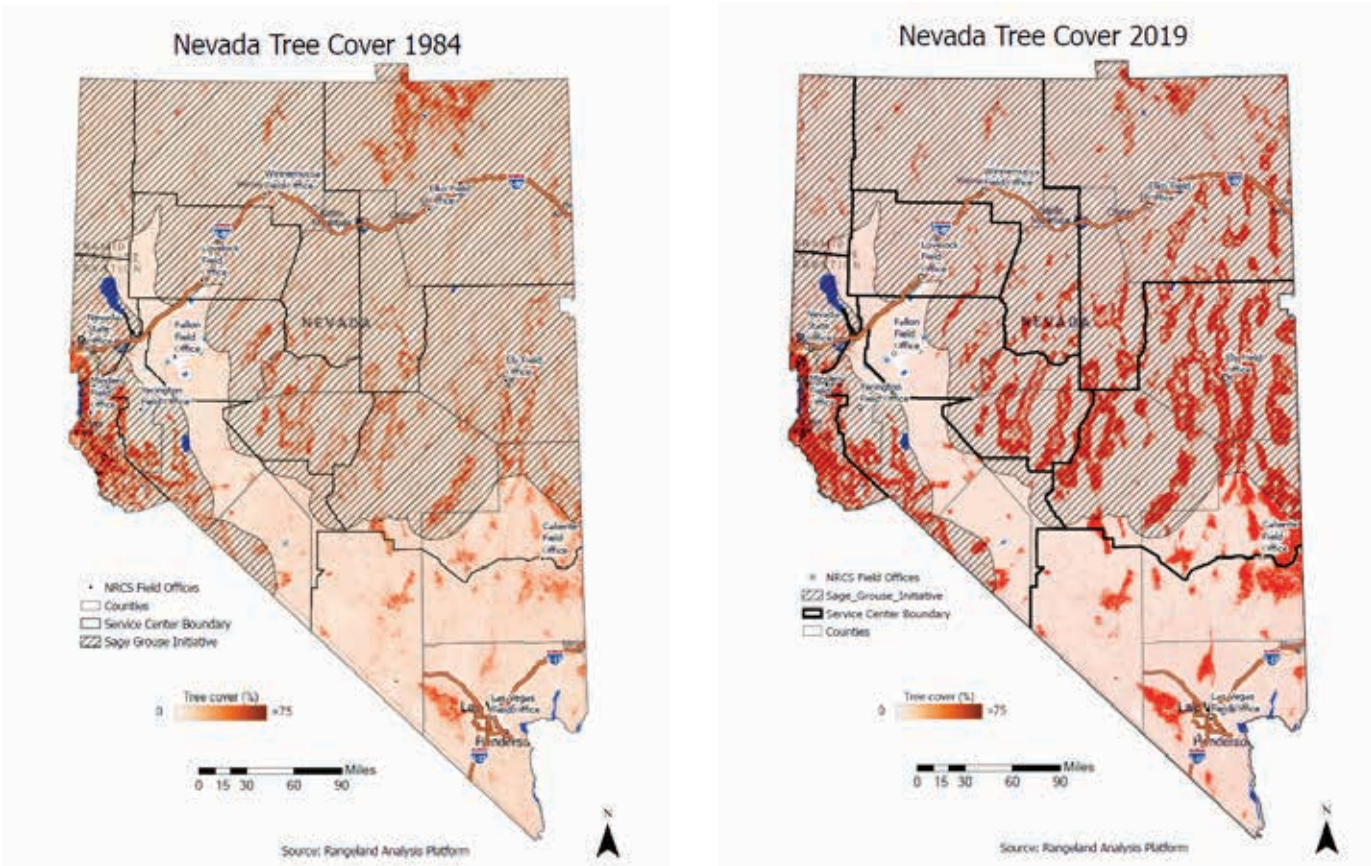
Four major threats to be addressed for 2021-25

- **Conifer Encroachment**
- **Riparian and Wet Meadow Degradation**
- **Invasive Annual Grasses**
- **Conservation Easements / Land Use Conversion**

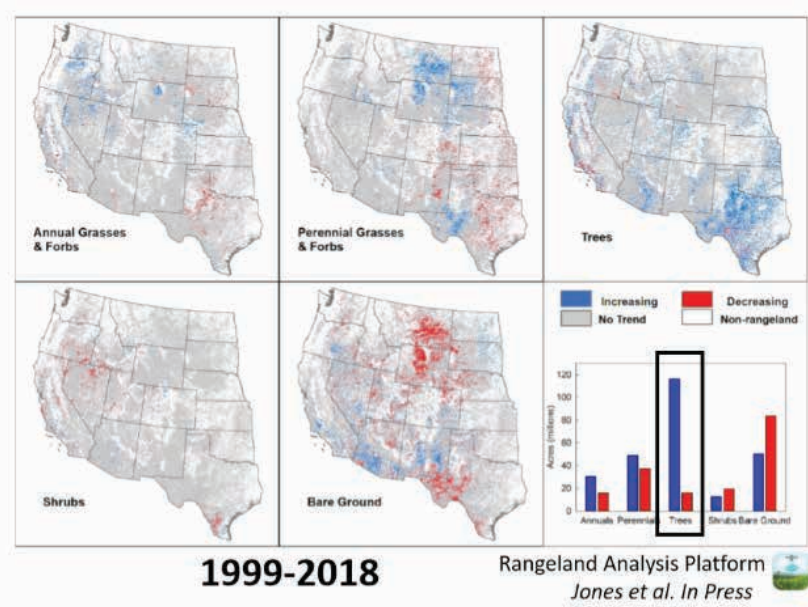


During the FY 2021-25 time period (and possibly beyond), Working Lands For Wildlife plans to put the main focus on four major threats that impact all rangelands in the West to varying degrees. While other efforts to protect and improve rangelands within the initiative boundaries will still be encouraged, precedence will be given to those projects that directly address one or more of these priority threats.

Conifer Encroachment

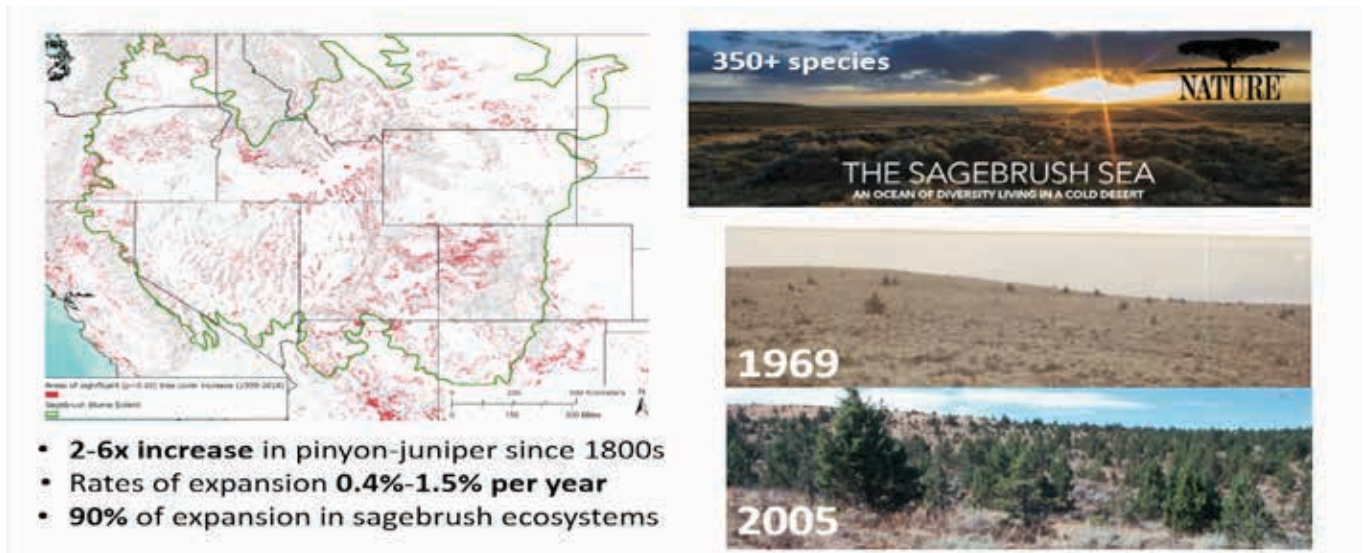


Woody Expansion is a National Rangeland Crisis

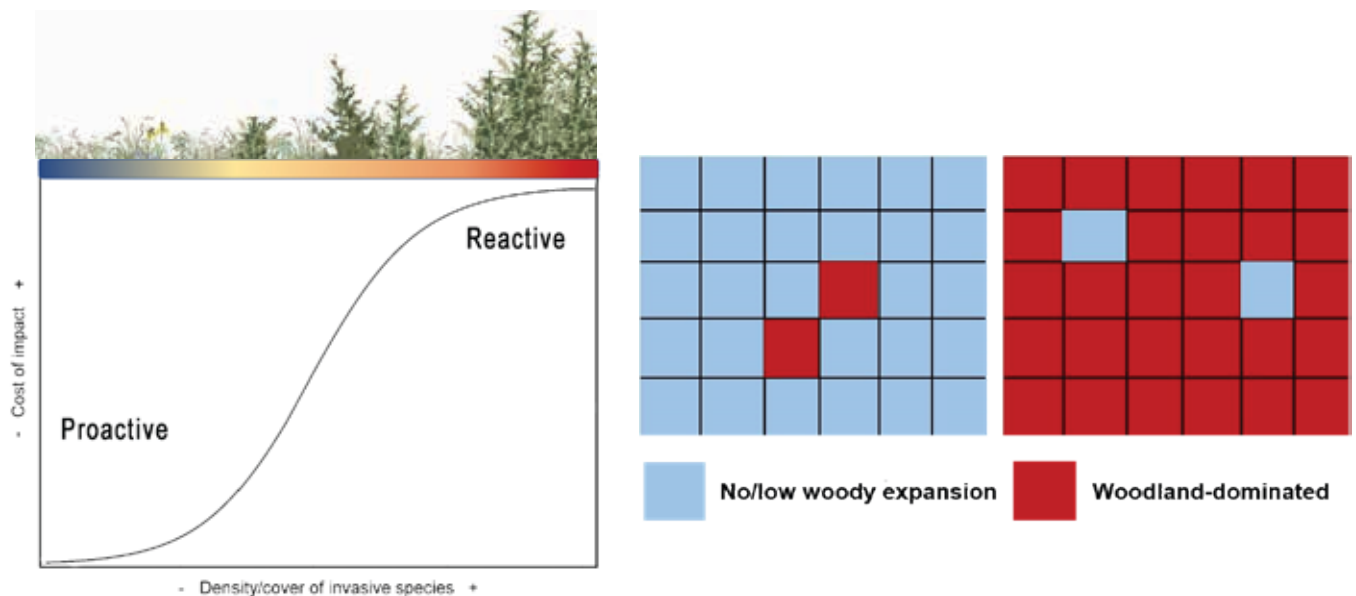


Since the 1800's, land use practices, fire suppression efforts, and a changing climate have resulted in significant increases in the amount of woodland encroachment into rangelands. Vast amounts of former rangeland shrub-steppe habitats are in a degraded state, or have been completely lost, as conifers encroach, infill, and eventually choke out all understory species. This progression greatly reduces plant biodiversity, forage production, and suitability of the range as wildlife habitat. As can be seen in these graphics, this is not a localized problem but a massive regionwide challenge. The loss of rangelands to conifer encroachment has wide-reaching negative impacts on wildlife species such as sage grouse, but also degrades and essentially removes lands from being suitable for livestock production.

As conifers move in, sagebrush moves out



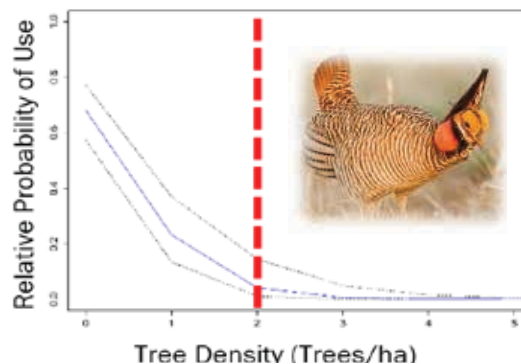
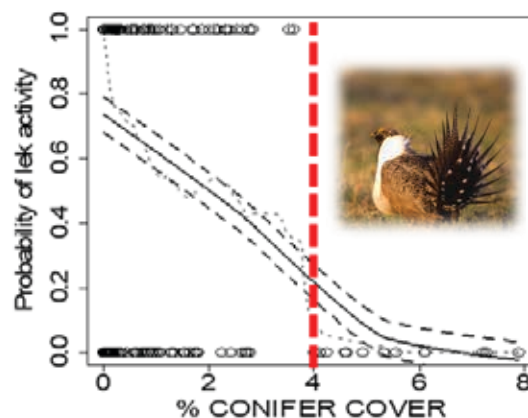
Where do we usually work? Where should we work?



Much of the efforts to address this issue in the past have focused on areas that had already been heavily invaded. Due to this, the costs of rehabilitation were extremely high (and often prohibitive), while the results of treating a late stage invasion with nearly complete coverage of conifer woodland were often disappointing and ineffective. At the late stages of invasion, the understory species of shrubs, forbs, and perennial grasses are no longer present and may take years or decades to return. Often, during that extended timeframe, invasive annuals which have been released from competition explode and one conservation concern is simply replaced by another. Rather than focus large amounts of funding trying to protect small islands of intact habitat amongst a sea of encroachment, moving forward WLFW will focus on addressing areas that are on the fringes, and in the early stages of invasion. These methods will allow much larger areas to be treated and effectively stop the invasion before it starts in treated areas. Treating areas in the early stages of invasion also maintains and improves the healthy native shrubland vegetation that remains once the conifers have been removed.

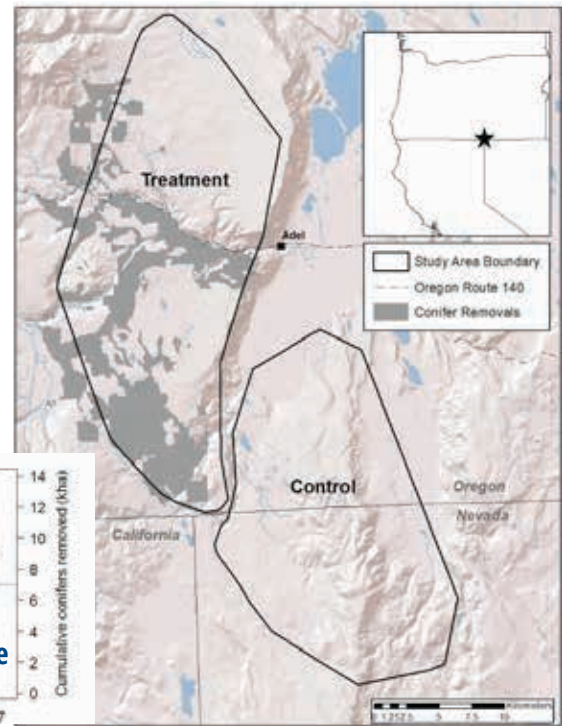
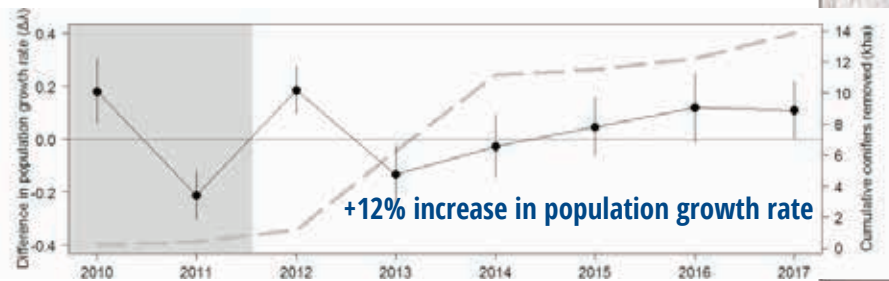


Rangeland post juniper treatment

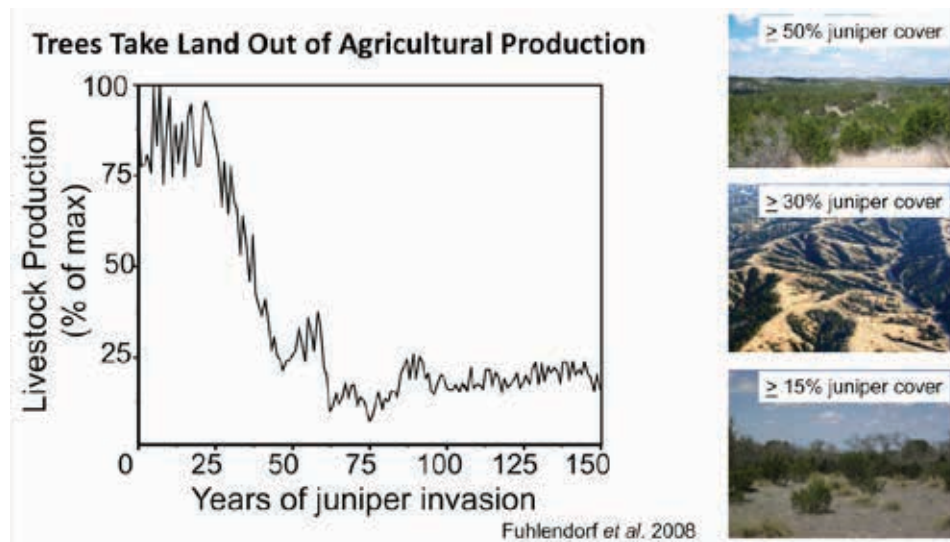




+ Co-Produced Science = OUTCOMES

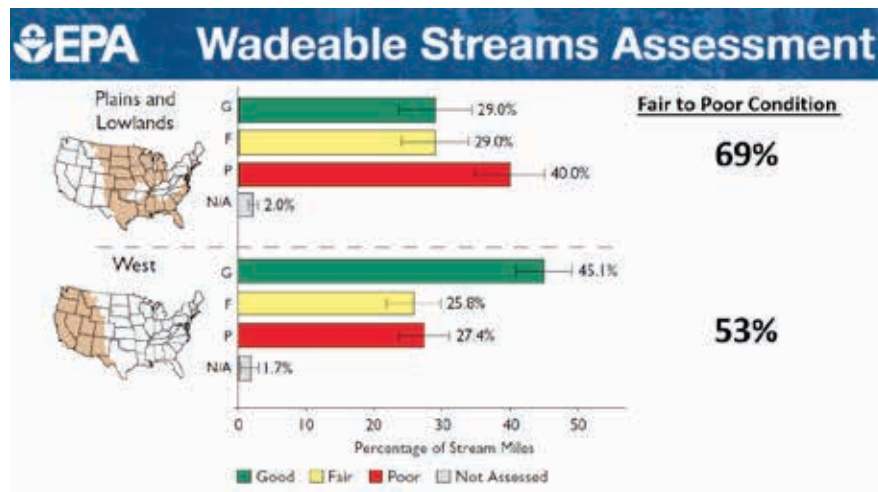


As can be seen in these graphics, a small amount of conifer encroachment can have massive impacts to shrubland obligate species such as sage grouse, with the probability of birds utilizing an area dropping to nearly zero once tree cover reaches as little as four percent of the landscape. Further, in a co-produced scientific study on the impacts of conifer treatment in Oregon, a large increase in population growth rates were observed after conifer thinning was conducted when compared to an untreated area nearby.

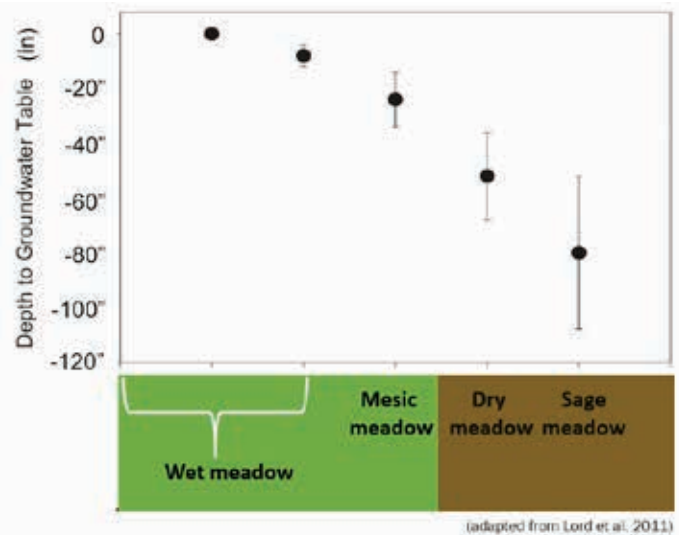
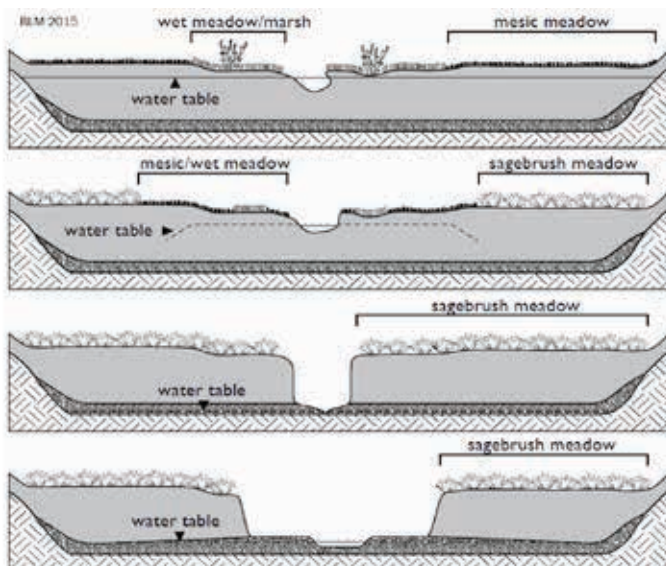


The impact of conifer encroachment can also be clearly seen as it relates to livestock production. As more rangeland is converted to woodland, less forage is available to livestock as well as wildlife. This can have a sizeable impact on the level of livestock production the land can support and the profitability of ranching operations in these areas.

Riparian and Wet Meadow Degradation



The Channel Incision Problem



As water table drops, green groceries go away

Throughout much of the country, our smaller creek, stream, and wet meadow systems have been altered, mismanaged, and degraded such that only approximately 45% of the streams in the West remain in “good” condition. Very commonly, improper management of the past has led river and stream systems to down cut and become incised within a deep narrow channel. This incision separates the stream from its

historic flood plain, preventing over bank flow during high waterflow events. These over bank flow events historically wet the surrounding area, while also reducing the energy from the water as it passes through grasses and other riparian vegetation which helped reduce erosion rates. By contrast, the incised stream channel holds all the water within its banks which exacerbates erosion often cut further down until the

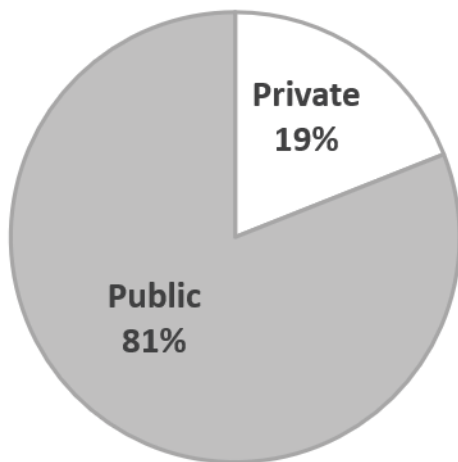
stream reaches bedrock or some other hardpan impervious layer. Once the water table has dropped and there is no connection to the original flood plain, the wet meadow and riparian vegetation that once occurred adjacent to the stream transitions to upland vegetation, greatly reducing available forage and habitat for wildlife and livestock.

Private landowners hold the key

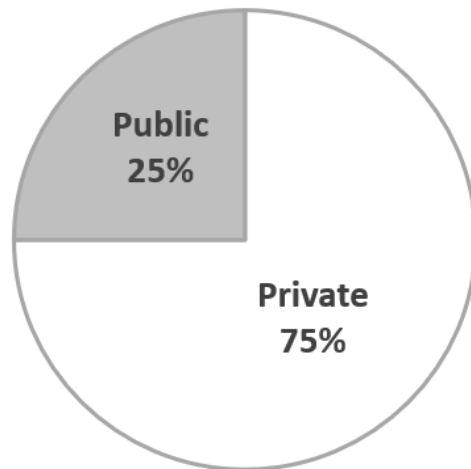


While the majority of lands in the West are federally managed as public land, a disproportionate amount of riparian and wet meadow habitat is held privately. This makes collaborative efforts between private landowners and public land management agencies imperative in maintaining the health and vitality of our rangelands.

Overall Ownership



Mesic Resources



How, What?

Higher Cost, Limited Extent

- Easements
- Mechanical restoration

Lower Cost, Broader Extent

- Low-tech restoration (“sticks and stones”)
- Grazing management
- Spring protection & enhancement
- Conifer removal

ACEP

Agricultural
Conservation
Easement
Program

EQIP

Environmental
Quality Incentives
Program

CSP

Conservation
Stewardship
Program

RCPP

Regional
Conservation
Partnership
Program



New low-tech methods have been, and are continuing to be, developed to address riparian and wet meadow degradation using minimal financial investment. Many of these practices can be implemented with minimal tools and a small group of volunteers. While the monetary investments are small, the ecological effects of installing one or a series of these structures in a stream system are often extremely beneficial and widespread. Increases in drought tolerance, increased abundance of forage for wildlife and livestock, stabilization of stream banks, resistance to flood damage, reduction in soil loss and erosion, increased amounts of water in perennial systems, and longer

duration of available water in ephemeral systems are some of the benefits that can be attained through restoration of degraded riparian and/or wet meadow habitat.

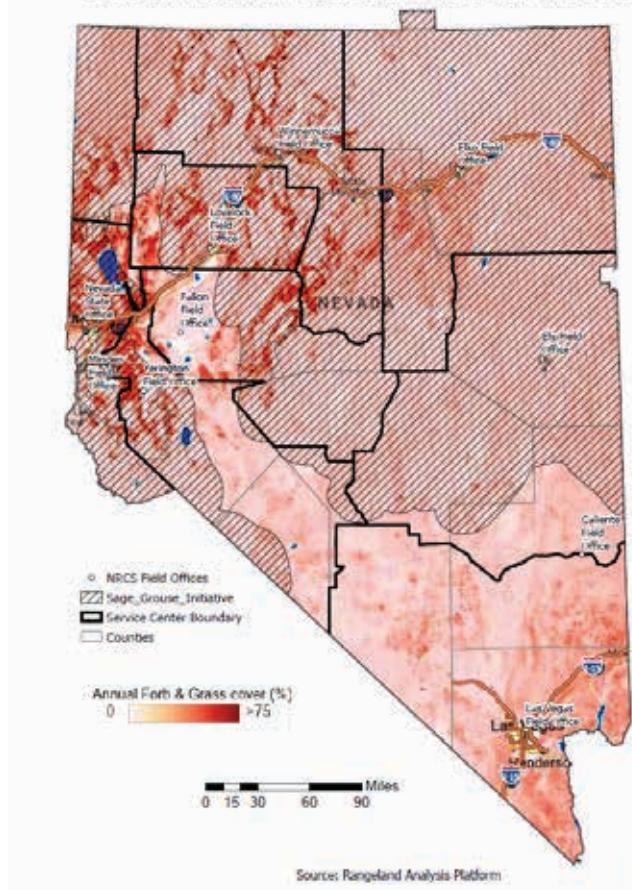
Wet meadow and riparian systems are of high ecological value to many wildlife species including sage grouse, quail, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and American pronghorn. While these areas represent a small percentage of the land-cover in rangeland communities, they can have disproportionate impacts on the population dynamics of wildlife species that depend on these habitats for at least a portion of their life cycle. In addition, these areas, when in

properly functioning condition, are extremely valuable as forage for livestock, and can maintain more water for longer periods of time in an otherwise arid rangeland environment.

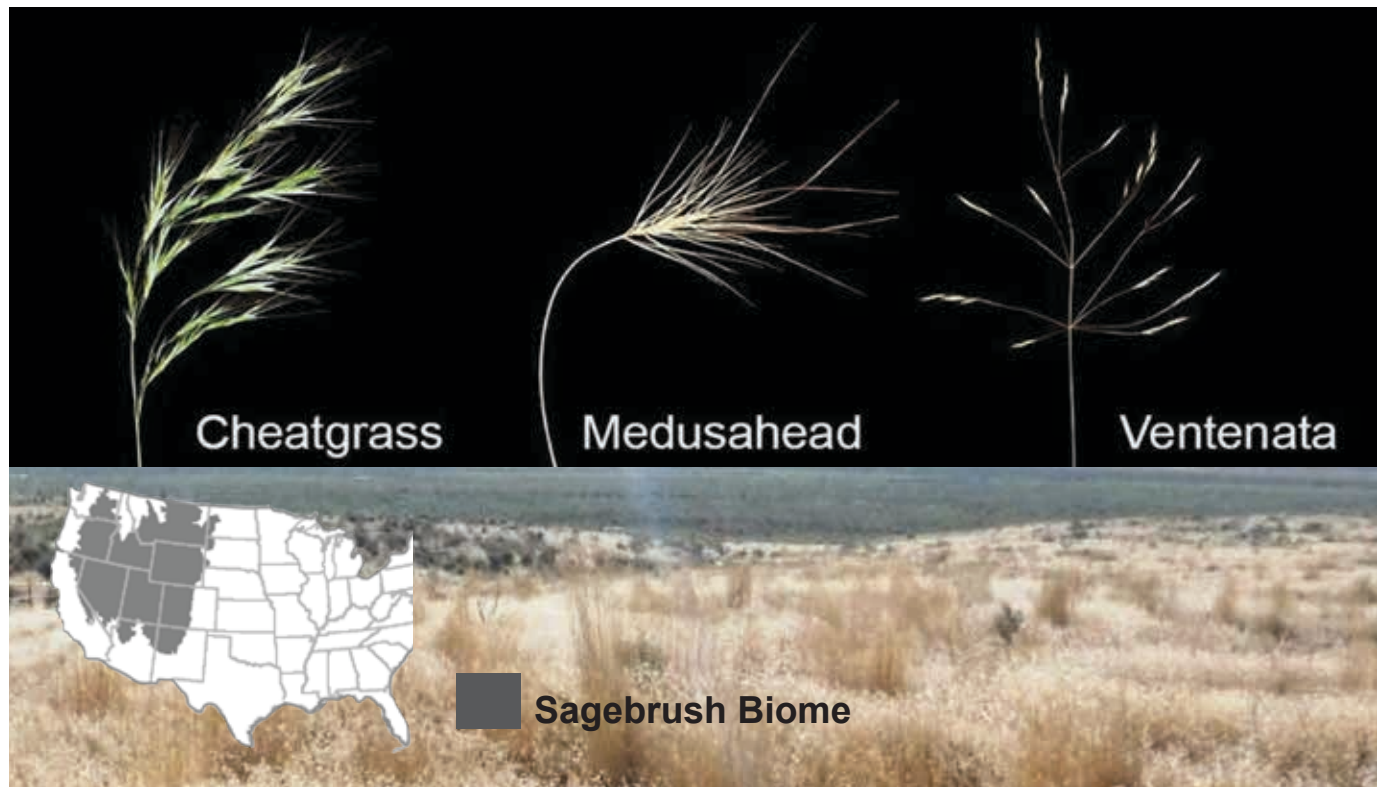
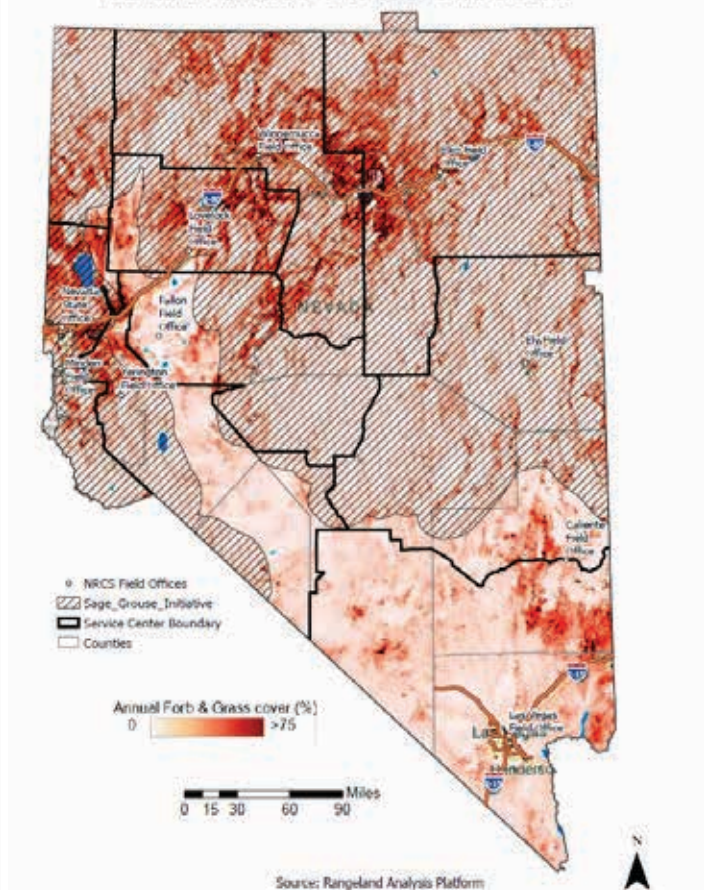


Exotic Annual Grass Invasion

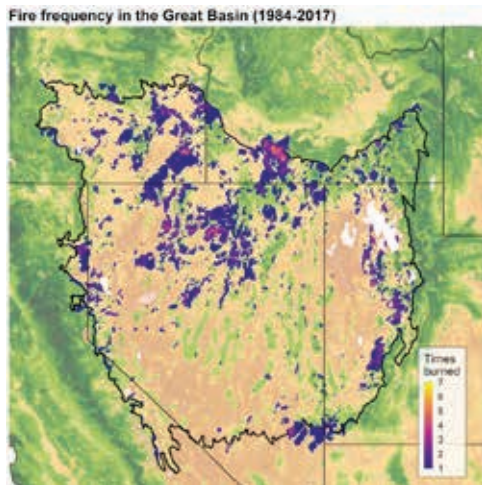
Nevada Annual Forb and Grass Cover 1984



Nevada Annual Forb and Grass Cover 2019



Throughout the past 30+ years, millions of acres of Great Basin rangelands have been invaded and, in many cases, completely supplanted by exotic invasive annual grasses. Grasses such as cheatgrass are often prevalent at low densities within the rangeland communities. However, once a large disturbance event such as wildfire occurs, these species (which are well adapted to fire and other disturbances) often return in high densities and outcompete native rangeland species. Once established, these annual grass invasions become extremely difficult to eradicate.



The Cheatgrass-Fire Cycle

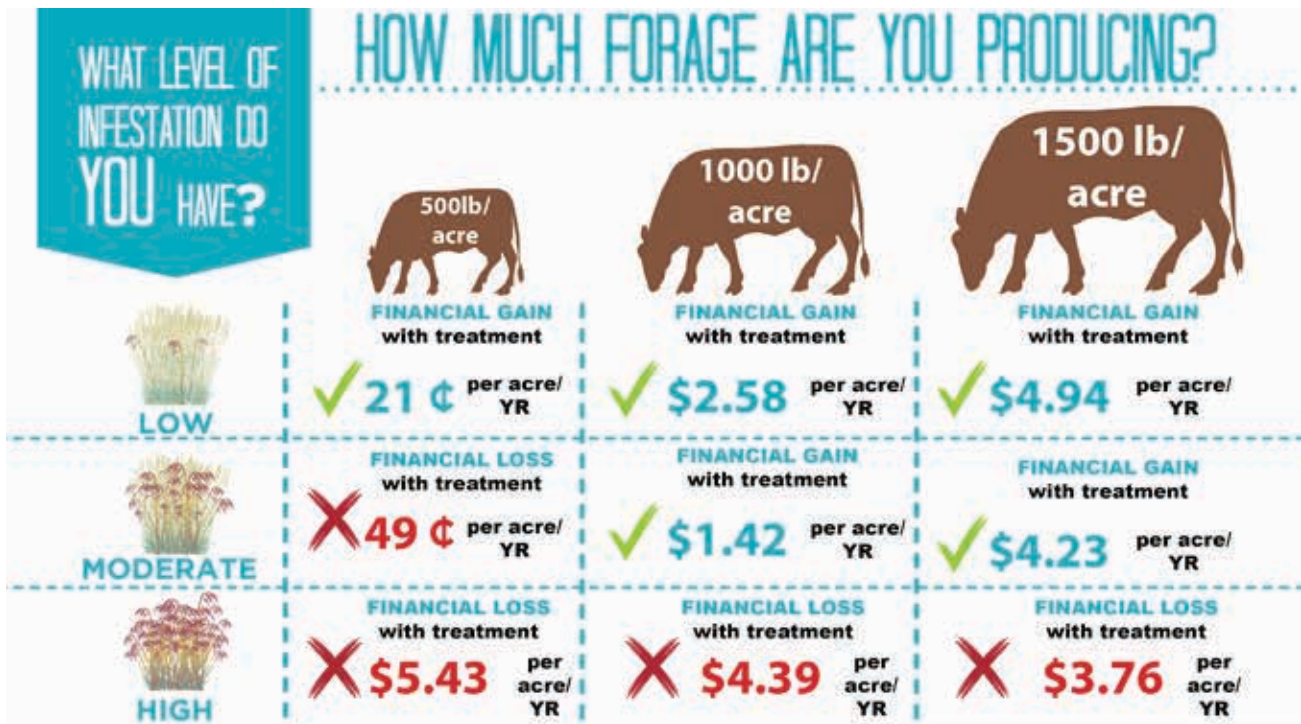


It has been well documented that increases in invasive annual grasses create a cyclical wildfire pattern where areas burn more frequently, and more severely, than they did historically. This increased fire activity often depletes the native seed bank and creates a positive feedback loop where the fire adapted and disturbance tolerant annual grasses come back at higher and higher densities following fire events, while the native shrubs and forbs which are not well adapted to the increase of fire interval or disturbance are outcompeted for resources. Climate experts predict that temperatures will continue to increase in the future, and additionally, drought conditions are expected to become more frequent, and more severe, in the future. This will likely lead to more wildfire, further loss of native shrublands, and a continuing increase in invasive annual grass invasion.

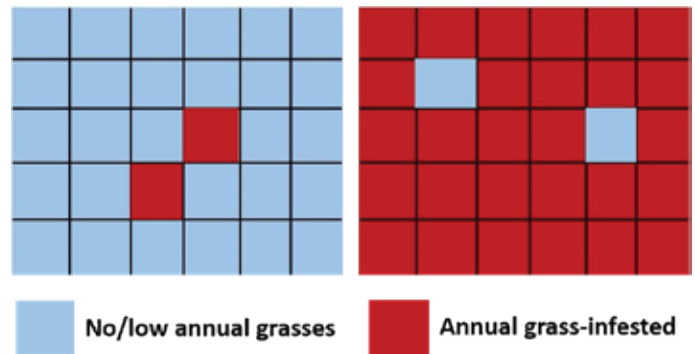
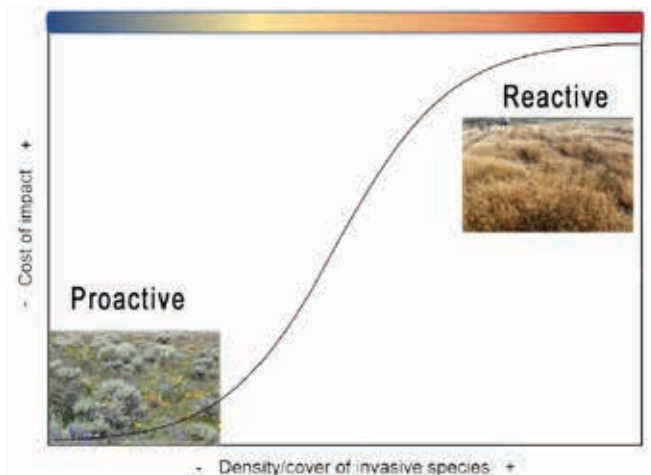
“ Invasive annuals put rangeland in a persistent state of drought.”

Invasive annuals reduce wildlife habitat quantity and quality





Where do we usually work? Where should we work?



In which landscape is annual grass control more likely to be effective?

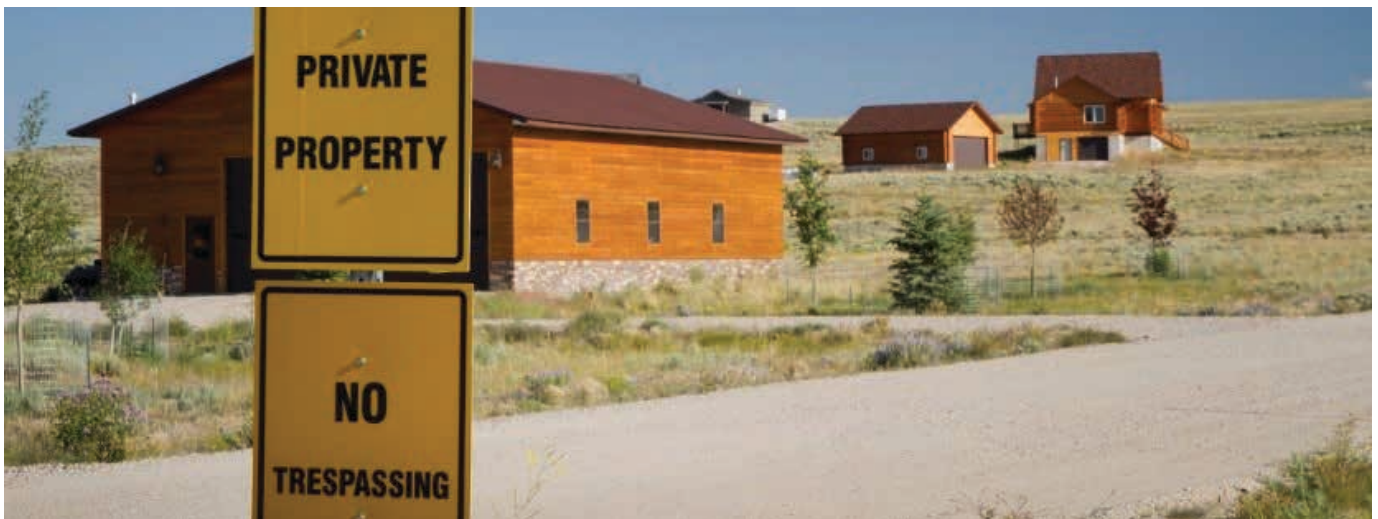
The conversion to invasive annual grasslands and loss of native shrubs, forbs, and perennial grasses greatly reduces the habitat quality of our rangelands for all wildlife. The amount of forage, cover, and available water on the rangeland is drastically reduced once an invasion becomes established, leaving those lands in a state of persistent drought, at high risk for wildfire events, and subsequently, at higher risk of erosion damage and soil loss post fire. As with woodland encroachment, once a system enters a state of high infestation of invasive annual grasses, the costs of restoring it skyrocket while the probability of success plummets. For this reason, the new focus of WLFW will be on protecting those core areas with healthy, robust, and resilient rangeland communities, as well as actively engaging in efforts in the transition zone where the invasive species are starting to gain a foothold but the native community is still present. Core areas that are intact will be identified and transition zones between core areas and areas of high infestation will be strategically targeted for conservation work in order to protect the healthy rangelands that still persist and attempt to expand those areas outward.

Conservation Easements / Land Use Conversion

As stated previously, much of the lands in the state of Nevada are public lands; however, almost three quarters of the mesic riparian and wet meadow habitat is privately owned. While land use conversion is not a widespread, statewide concern, the importance and ecological value of privately owned lands cannot be discounted. Loss of these types of habitats to residential or commercial development, or conversion of these areas to agricultural crop production can have far-reaching impacts to rangeland obligate

wildlife and greatly reduce the productivity of the rangeland for ranching. The removal or conversion of a wet meadow habitat has the possibility of reducing habitat suitability to a point where it is no longer viable for a population to remain in the area. Regardless of the quality and quantity of the surrounding rangeland, the loss of a key habitat factor such as wet meadow/riparian habitat can cause the whole area to become poor or even unsuitable habitat. While the loss of key habitat

features such as wet meadows and riparian corridors can have an immediate and extremely harmful impact on many wildlife species, any fragmentation of intact habitat will degrade its suitability for both wildlife and livestock production. The goal of WLFW in addressing this threat is to keep as much rangeland intact and connected as possible, while prioritizing areas of extremely high value such as wet meadow/riparian areas.



Northwestern Nevada easement

Partnering For Success

Partnership, collaboration, and a shared vision towards conservation creates the foundation for success in landscape-wide, multi-jurisdictional conservation efforts. NRCS plans to find those areas where private lands within the WLFW initiative priority areas align with, or are adjacent to, priority locations for conservation districts, land management agencies, state and federal wildlife agencies, and local working groups. In this way, conservation efforts can be targeted to those areas where multiple parties are invested, and work will not cease at an ownership boundary, but instead will be able to be implemented on much larger and continuous areas. Much work towards conservation can be achieved in the next five years, especially with partnerships, collaborations, and a shared vision and stewardship of our rangelands.



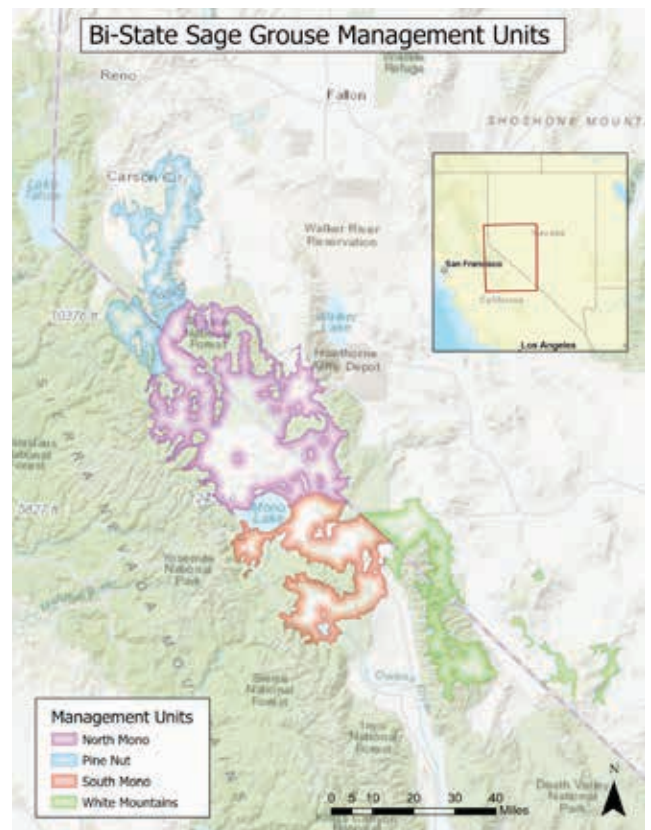
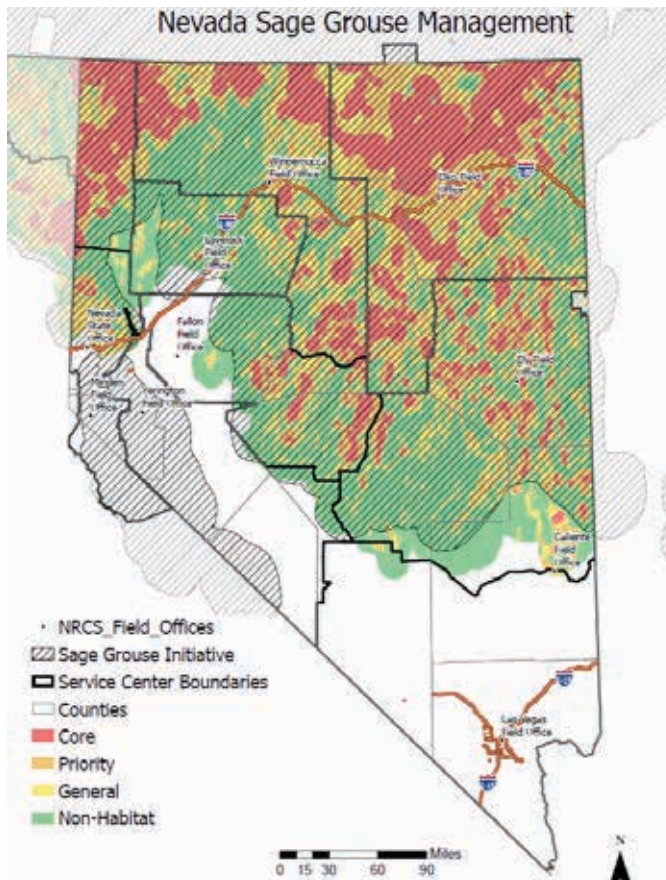
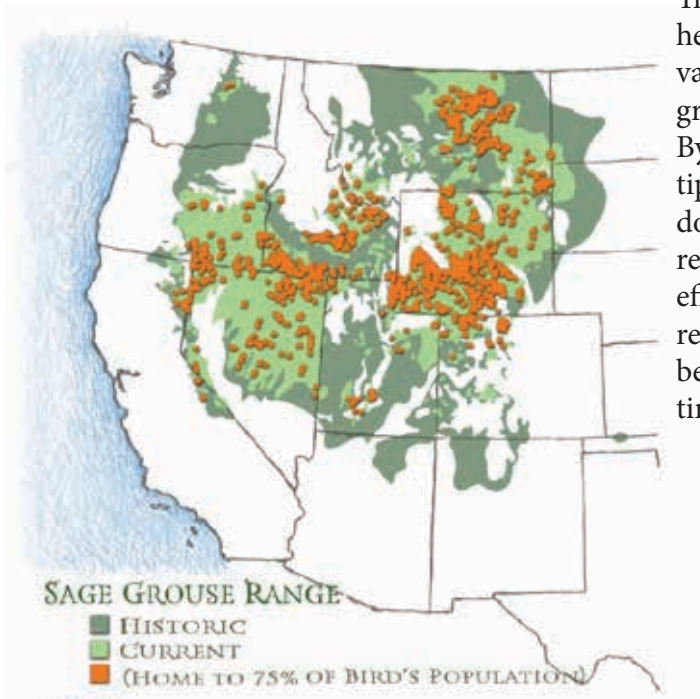
Photo by Rick McEwan



The Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) is a new paradigm for conserving at-risk wildlife and America's western rangelands that works through voluntary cooperation, incentives, and community support. Launched in 2010, SGI is a partnership-based, science-driven effort that is part of Working Lands For Wildlife, which is led by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. SGI applies the power of the Farm Bill to target lands where habitats are intact and sage grouse numbers are highest. To date, SGI has partnered with 2,100 ranchers to conserve nearly 8 million acres across 11 western states. While private lands are the primary focus, SGI also serves as a catalyst for public land enhancements. Working together, we are passing on our western heritage of vast skies, beautiful rangelands, and room to roam for people, livestock, and wildlife.



The latest cutting-edge science and technology is helping our partners direct resources where conservation returns are highest. Three-quarters of sage grouse concentrate on one-quarter of their range. By focusing our efforts on the core habitats, we multiply our return on investments – spending our first dollar conserving 500 birds, instead of five. SGI also relies on science to document the biological benefits of Farm Bill investments. Rather than simply reporting acres treated, SGI measures the biological benefits of habitat improvements. New insights continually improve on-the-ground results.



Community-level conservation results in pride of ownership. It also takes people helping people to get the work done. That's why the NRCS joined forces with a dozen partner organizations to add 20+ field positions in rural communities across sagebrush range to help ranchers on the ground. From Malta, Montana, to Elko, Nevada, these jointly-funded range and wildlife conservationists comprise SGI's "Strategic Watershed Action Team." They are our boots on the ground, working each day with hundreds of ranchers to proactively conserve the iconic western range. Our field staff are dedicated to matching Farm Bill programs with ranchers who can use them, improving agricultural operations as well as wildlife habitat.

Working Lands for Wildlife

The partnership is the engine that powers the Sage Grouse Initiative. The growing alliance of stakeholders embraces a kaleidoscope of interests, values, and backgrounds. While the NRCS conceived SGI and channels funding through the Farm Bill, success is only possible through partners that leverage funds, shoulder work, and take on policies beyond our scope. In addition to local communities and ranchers, every state and many public land agencies have stepped up to safeguard sage grouse. We invite more partners to join us to achieve wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching.

You might call it kitchen table conservation. A lot happens over coffee or out mending fence. When one rancher enrolls in the Sage Grouse Initiative

and the neighbor likes what he or she sees, the word spreads. Pretty soon, you've got applications flooding the local NRCS offices.

The NRCS has a long history of living and working in rural communities. The staff and the SGI partner employees understand the importance of flexibility and meeting landowners on their own schedule for voluntary conservation to work. It's not surprising that more than 2100 ranchers have enrolled in the Sage Grouse Initiative. It's all about trust and credibility.

To date, with cooperation and collaboration from landowners, partner groups and other state and federal agencies, nearly **900,000 acres** serviced by NRCS Nevada have been protected or improved through almost **150 separate contracts** and accounting for more than **\$47 million** in funding under the Sage Grouse Initiative.



Photo by Ken Miracle

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Initiative/Desert Riparian



Best known for its unique “fitz-bew” call, the southwestern willow flycatcher depends on the riparian and wetland habitats of the arid southwest. The bird serves as an indicator of this unique landscape, where water is so crucial. It’s the lifeblood of the desert southwest with hundreds of species depending on it for survival. Lush vegetation surrounding rivers and streams in this region harbor hundreds of different wildlife species, rivaling the Amazon’s rainforests in biodiversity.

Because of loss and fragmentation of habitat, largely caused by surface water diversion, groundwater pumping and the spread of invasive plants, the bird’s numbers have plummeted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the species endangered in 1995.

But stewardship-minded landowners from across the Southwest have stepped up and are helping the bird and many other wildlife species by voluntarily restoring and improving the health of the region’s riparian ecosystems.

Landowners in targeted areas of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah are helping the southwestern willow flycatcher rebound by restoring degraded riparian ecosystems, conserving existing healthy riparian systems and improving working lands near riparian areas. NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to help landowners voluntarily restore riparian areas on private lands. This assistance helps producers plan and implement a variety of conservation activities, or practices, that benefit the migratory bird and agricul-

tural operations.

The agency’s staff of experts work side-by-side with landowners to develop a conservation plan. This plan is customized for the landowner’s land and provides a roadmap for how to use a system of conservation practices to meet natural resource and production goals.

Financial assistance helps landowners pay for the adoption of conservation practices that improve the health of the riparian ecosystems. NRCS assistance typically covers 50 to 70 percent of the actual cost. Common conservation practices for the southwestern willow flycatcher include restoring riparian areas, removing invasive trees like Russian olive and salt cedar and using prescribed grazing and burning. The

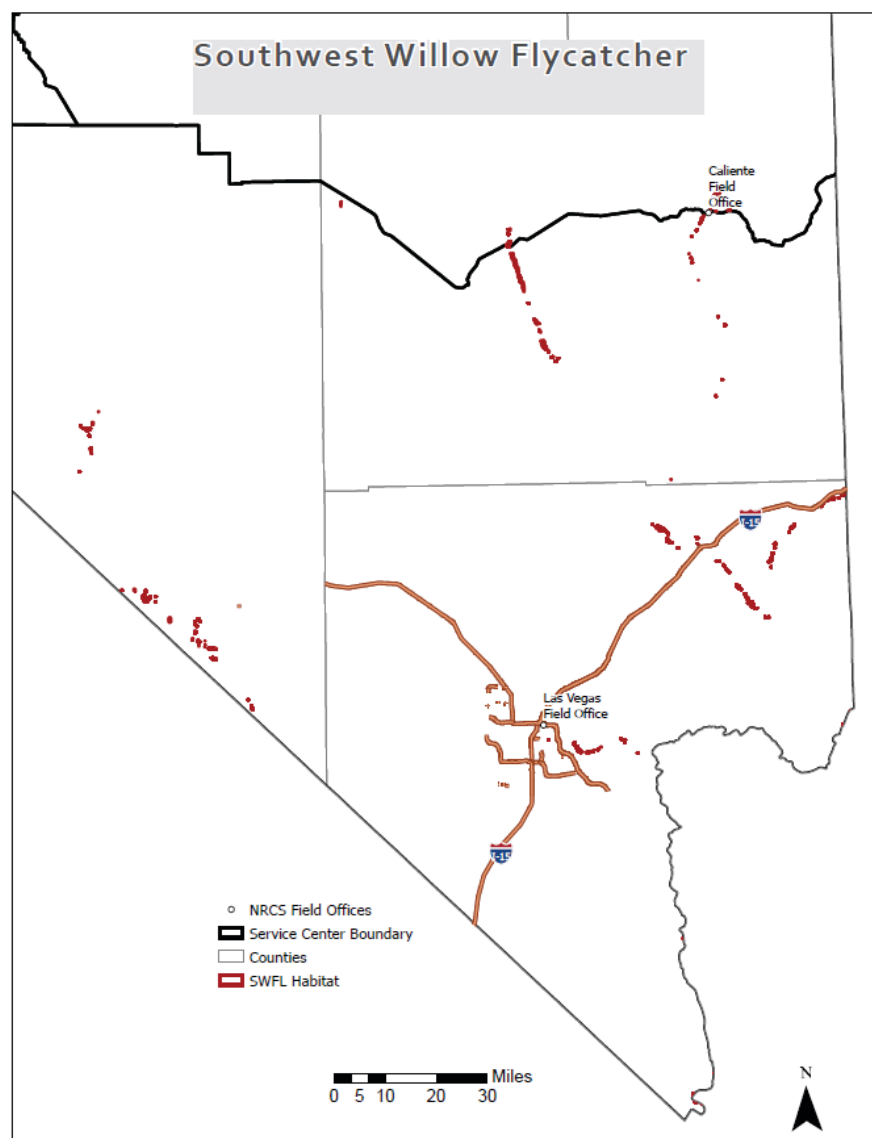
southwestern willow flycatcher is a nationally identified target species of the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) partnership, a collaborative approach to conserve habitat on working lands. Since 2012, WLFW enabled producers to conserve or create more than 8,000 acres of riparian areas and adjacent upland habitat. WLFW provides technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which is funded through the Farm Bill, the largest funding source for wildlife habitat conservation on private lands.

Through WLFW, NRCS targets conservation efforts where the returns are highest by targeting threats to the bird. The flycatcher nests in native trees and shrubs where available, but also nests in thickets dominated by the non-native invasive species like tamarisk and Russian olive. Efforts to control non-native species can be detrimental to flycatchers, especially if those plants are removed in places lacking in suitable native riparian habitat.

Restoring habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher not only benefits the flycatcher but many other species, such as the yellow billed cuckoo, and Least Bell's vireo. Eighty-four imperiled species, including the flycatcher, benefit from conservation work in riparian ecosystems. Through WLFW, landowners who maintain conservation practices and systems that benefit the southwestern willow flycatcher will be covered for any incidental take that may occur as a result of the

conservation activities for up to 30 years for 84 species.

To date, there have been two projects completed in areas serviced by Nevada NRCS under this initiative accounting for 20 acres of restored/protected habitat and an investment of more than \$36,000.



Nevada Estimated WLFW Conservation Actions FY 2021-25

| Woodland Expansion | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | FY 2021 | | FY 2022 | | FY 2023 | | FY 2024 | | FY 2025 | |
| | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA |
| EQUIP | 2500 | \$586,343 | 2950 | \$645,103 | 3250 | \$662,217 | 3350 | \$661,607 | 2150 | \$517,647 |
| CSP | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-ALE | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-WRE | | | | | | | | | | |
| RCPP | 120 | \$13,000 | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals: | 2620 | \$599,343 | 2950 | \$645,103 | 3250 | \$662,217 | 3350 | \$661,607 | 2150 | \$517,647 |
| Five Year Strategy Totals | | | Acres Treated: 14,320 | | | Farm Bill FA: \$3,085.917 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Primary Practices used: 314 Brush Management; 384 Woody Residue Treatment **Additional Practices used: 382 Fence; 528 Prescribed Grazing; 550 Range Planting

| Riparian and Wet Meadow Degradation | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | FY 2021 | | FY 2022 | | FY 2023 | | FY 2024 | | FY 2025 | |
| | Total Acres/ Miles | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres/ Miles | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres/ Miles | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres/ Miles | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres/ Miles | Farm Bill FA |
| EQUIP | 550 | \$105,558 | 550 | \$105,558 | 660 | \$175,588 | 555 | \$115,588 | 550 | \$105,558 |
| CSP | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-ALE | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-WRE | | | | | | | | | | |
| RCPP | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals: | 550 | \$105,558 | 550 | \$105,558 | 660 | \$175,588 | 555 | \$115,588 | 550 | \$105,558 |
| Five Year Strategy Totals | | | Acres Treated: 2865 | | | Farm Bill FA: \$607,850 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Primary Practices used: 314 Brush Management; 327 Conservation Cover; 342 Critical Area Planting; 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover; 391 Riparian Forest Buffer; **410 Grade Stabilization Structure**; **420 Wildlife Habitat Planting**; 472 Access Control; 490 Tree/Shrub Site Preparation; 512 Forage and Biomass Planting; **528 Prescribed Grazing**; 574 Spring Development; 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection; 582 Open Channel; 584 Channel Bed Stabilization; 643 Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities; 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management; 657 Wetland Restoration; 659 Wetland Enhancement **Additional Practices used: 382 Fence; 430 Irrigation Pipeline; 516 Livestock Pipeline; 533 Pumping Plant; 574 Spring Development; 587 Structure for Water Control; 614 Watering Facility

| Exotic Annual Grass Invasion | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | FY 2021 | | FY 2022 | | FY 2023 | | FY 2024 | | FY 2025 | |
| | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA |
| EQIP | 1857 | \$399,265 | 2929 | \$397,900 | 2980 | \$553,323 | 4720 | \$590,656 | 2993 | \$554,267 |
| CSP | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-ALE | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-WRE | | | | | | | | | | |
| RCPP | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals: | 1857 | \$399,265 | 2929 | \$397,900 | 2980 | \$553,323 | 4720 | \$590,656 | 2993 | \$554,267 |
| Five Year Strategy Totals | | | Acres Treated: 15,479 | | | Farm Bill FA: \$2,524,729 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Primary Practices used: **315 Herbaceous Weed Treatment**; 327 Conservation Cover; 338 Prescribed Burning; 342 Critical Area Planting; 383 Fuel Break; 394 Firebreak; **420 Wildlife Habitat Planting**; 512 Forage and Biomass Planting; **528 Prescribed Grazing**; **550 Range Planting**

| Conservation Easements / Land Use Conversion | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | FY 2021 | | FY 2022 | | FY 2023 | | FY 2024 | | FY 2025 | |
| | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA | Total Acres | Farm Bill FA |
| EQIP | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSP | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-ALE | | | | | | | | | | |
| ACEP-WRE | | | | | 1173 | \$1.5M | | | | |
| RCPP | 1228 | \$1.5M | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals: | 1228 | \$1.5M | | | 1173 | \$1.5M | | | | |
| Five Year Strategy Totals | | | Acres Treated: 2401 | | | Farm Bill FA: \$3,000,000 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Primary Practices used: 327 Conservation Cover; 342 Critical Area Planting; **382 Fence**; **420 Wildlife Habitat Planting**; 512 Forage and Biomass Planting; **528 Prescribed Grazing**; 516 Livestock Pipeline; 550 Range Planting; 614 Watering Facility ****Additional Practices used: 657 Wetland Restoration; 659 Wetland Enhancement; 644 Wetland Habitat Restoration; 587 Structure for Water Control**

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